



USDA-NASS

Montana Crop & Livestock Reporter

survey results summary issued twice monthly by the
Montana Agricultural Statistics Service

Issue: 04-10 (0270-0304) Released: May 27, 2004

HIGHLIGHTS:

Red Meat Production
Cattle on Feed
Milk Production
Barley Ag Chem Use
Egg Production
Potato Stocks
April Farm Labor
U.S. Ag Export Forecasts - ERS

April 2004 Red Meat Production

Montana slaughter plants produced 1.2 million pounds, dressed weight, of red meat during April 2004, down 6 percent from April 2003, but up 2 percent from March 2004. Cattle slaughter totaled 1,500 head, equal to that one year ago. The average live weight, at 1,170 pounds, decreased 10 pounds from last year.

During April there were 900 hogs slaughtered, down 100 head from a year ago. The average live weight, at 238 pounds, was down 2 pounds from last year. April sheep slaughter in the state totaled 200 head, down from 300 head in April 2003. The average live weight decreased 17 pounds to 127 pounds.

Commercial red meat production for the United States totaled 3.71 billion pounds in April, down 3 percent from the 3.85 billion pounds produced in April 2003.

Beef production, at 1.96 billion pounds, was 9 percent below the previous year. Cattle slaughter totaled 2.70 million head, down 9 percent from April 2003. The average live weight was down 9 pounds from the previous year, at 1,200 pounds.

Veal production totaled 13.9 million pounds, 13 percent below April a year ago. Calf slaughter totaled 70,700 head, down 11 percent from April 2003. The

average live weight was 7 pounds below last year, at 329 pounds.

Pork production totaled 1.73 billion pounds, up 4 percent from the previous year, and set a record monthly high. Hog kill totaled 8.65 million head, 4 percent above April 2003. The average live weight was unchanged the previous year, at 268 pounds.

Lamb and mutton production, at 17.4 million pounds, was down 11 percent from April 2003. Sheep slaughter totaled 256,000 head, 14 percent below last year. The average live weight was 136 pounds, up 5 pounds from April a year ago.

January to April 2004 commercial red meat production was 14.8 billion pounds, down 2 percent from 2003. Accumulated beef production was down 8 percent from last year, veal was down 12 percent, pork was up 5 percent from last year, and lamb and mutton production was up 2 percent.

Livestock County Estimates Now Available

County estimates for the January 1, 2004, cattle and calf inventory are now available at www.nass.usda.gov/mt under county data. District-level estimates for December 1, 2003. All Chickens and county-level estimates for December 1, 2003 Hogs and Pigs and January 1, 2004 Sheep and Lambs will be available at a later date.

The Montana Agricultural Statistics Service compiles the only annual county estimates for Montana. These county estimates are based on livestock surveys conducted at the end of 2003 and the beginning of 2004.

Questionnaires were sent to a sample of farmers and ranchers throughout Montana asking for information on the livestock inventories. Thank you to all

the farmers and ranchers who participated in the survey!

U.S. Cattle on Feed Down 2 Percent

Cattle and calves on feed for slaughter market in the United States for feedlots with capacity of 1,000 or more head totaled 10.36 million head on May 1, 2004. The inventory was 2 percent below May 1, 2003 and 6 percent below May 1, 2002.

Placements in feedlots during April totaled 1.60 million, 14 percent below 2003 but 10 percent above 2002. Net placements were 1.51 million. During April, placements of cattle and calves weighing less than 600 pounds were 316,000, 600-699 pounds were 302,000, 700-799 pounds were 567,000, and 800 pounds and greater were 418,000.

Marketings of fed cattle during April totaled 1.89 million, 5 percent below both 2003 and 2002. Other disappearance totaled 97,000 during April, 54 percent above 2003 and 17 percent above 2002.

April Milk Production Down 0.9 Percent

Milk production in the 20 major States during April totaled 12.6 billion pounds, down 0.9 percent from April 2003. March revised production, at 12.8 billion pounds, was down 1.7 percent from March 2003. The March revision represented an increase of 0.2 percent or 22 million pounds from last month's preliminary production estimate.

Production per cow in the 20 major States averaged 1,630 pounds for April, 3 pounds above April 2003. The number of milk cows on farms in the 20 major States was 7.72 million head, 81,000 head less than April 2003, but 2,000 head more than March 2004.

Barley 2003 Agricultural Chemical Use

Montana barley producers applied nitrogen fertilizers to 92 percent of the acreage planted for the 2003 crop. A total of 44.2 million pounds of nitrogen fertilizer was applied to the 1.1 million acres of barley planted in Montana. Of the planted acreage 88 percent received phosphate fertilizer while potash was used on 52 percent of the acres. Total application of phosphate was 30.2 million pounds and potash totaled 9.7 million pounds.

Barley producers applied 1.005 million pounds of herbicides to 93 percent of the barley acres planted in 2003. The most common herbicide applied was Glyphosate with 45 percent of the acreage sprayed. The next two most popular herbicides applied and percent of acreage sprayed were 2,4-D with 36 percent and MCPA with 20 percent.

Nationally, nitrogen was applied to 93 percent of the 2003 barley planted acreage in the following Program States: California, Idaho, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. Nitrogen applications ranged from 37 percent of the acres treated in Wisconsin to 99 percent in Washington. Barley growers used an average of 1.4 applications per acre while applying 40 pounds of nitrogen per treatment. This computes to a crop year rate per acre of 60 pounds. In the Program States, 79 percent of the acres of barley planted received a phosphate application, while potash was applied to 29 percent of the acreage planted to barley.

Herbicides were applied to 93 percent of the program states barley planted acreage in 2003. MCPA was the most widely applied herbicide with 45 percent of the planted acreage being treated. It was applied at a rate of 0.32 pounds per acre. The next three most widely applied herbicides applied to barley, namely 2,4-D, bromoxynil, and fenoxaprop, were applied to 30, 29, and 28 percent, respectively, of the planted barley acreage.

In 2003 program states, 3 percent of the barley planted acreage was treated with insecticides. The insecticides applied to barley were all put on less than one

percent of the planted acres; therefore, no area applied values were published. Based on total pounds applied, methyl parathion at 9,000 pounds, was the most widely used insecticide on barley acres planted in the Program States. Fungicides were applied to 7 percent of the barley planted acreage in the States in the survey program.

May Potato Stocks

Montana potato producers held 500,000 cwt. of potatoes in storage on May 1, 2004, up 25 percent from the previous year. Fifteen percent of the 2003 Montana potato crop is still in storage, compared with 12 percent last year.

The 15 major potato States held 84.8 million cwt of potatoes in storage May 1, 2004, up 2 percent from last year and 4 percent above 2002. Potatoes in storage account for 21 percent of the 2003 fall storage States' production, up 1 percentage point from last year.

Disappearance of 319 million cwt of potatoes is down 2 percent from last year but 4 percent above two years ago. Shrink and loss, at 27.0 million cwt so far this season, is up 5 percent from last year and 8 percent above two years ago. This disappearance and loss includes unmarketable Maine potatoes disposed of through the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Environmental Quality Incentives Program.

Processors used 154 million cwt of 2003 crop potatoes so far this season, down 3 percent from a year ago but 4 percent above two years ago. April usage of 16.7 million cwt is 2 percent above last year and up 1 percent from two years ago. Dehydrators used 34.6 million cwt to date, down 4 percent from last year.

Western States held 59.3 million cwt of potatoes in storage on May 1, down 6 percent from last year and 5 percent below two years ago. Idaho's potato stocks are down 3 percent from last year, Washington decreased 9 percent, and Colorado's storages held 38 percent less. Potato sheds in Oregon stored 10 percent more than last year, California increased 20 percent, and Montana's storages gained 25 percent.

April U.S. Egg Production Up 2 Percent

U.S. egg production totaled 7.34 billion during April 2004, up 2 percent from last year. Production included 6.28 billion table eggs, and 1.07 billion hatching eggs, of which 1.01 billion were broiler-type and 58.0 million were egg-type. The total number of layers during April 2004 averaged 342 million, up 1 percent from a year earlier. April egg production per 100 layers was 2,148 eggs, up 1 percent from April 2003.

All layers in the U.S. on May 1, 2004, totaled 342 million, up 1 percent from a year ago. The 342 million layers consisted of 282 million layers producing table or commercial type eggs, 57.2 million layers producing broiler-type hatching eggs, and 2.49 million layers producing egg-type hatching eggs. Rate of lay per day on May 1, 2004, averaged 71.0 eggs per 100 layers, up 1 percent from a year ago.

Laying flocks in the 30 major egg producing States produced 6.85 billion eggs during April 2004, up 2 percent from a year ago. The average number of layers during April, at 319 million, was up 1 percent from a year ago.

Egg-Type Chicks Hatched Down 1 Percent

Egg-type chicks hatched during April totaled 37.5 million, down 1 percent from April 2003. Eggs in incubators totaled 34.1 million on May 1, 2004, down 3 percent from a year ago.

Domestic placements of egg-type pullet chicks for future hatchery supply flocks by leading breeders totaled 311,000 during April 2004, up 11 percent from April 2003.

Broiler Hatch Up 2 Percent

The April 2004 hatch of broiler-type chicks, at 774 million, was up 2 percent from April of the previous year. There were 661 million eggs in incubators on May 1, 2004, up 2 percent from a year earlier. Leading breeders placed 6.4 million broiler-type pullet chicks for future domestic hatchery supply flocks during April 2004, down 5 percent from April 2003.

Hired Workers Up 15 Percent, Wage Rates Up 1 Percent From a Year Ago

There were 1,077,000 hired workers on the Nation's farms and ranches during the week of April 11-17, 2004, up 15 percent from a year ago. Of these hired workers, 825,000 workers were hired directly by farm operators. Agricultural service employees on farms and ranches made up the remaining 252,000 workers.

Farm operators paid their hired workers an average wage of \$9.22 per hour during the April 2004 reference week, up 6 cents from a year earlier. Field workers received an average of \$8.46 per hour, up 6 cents from last April, while livestock workers earned \$8.95 per hour compared with \$8.75 a year earlier. The field and livestock worker combined wage rate, at \$8.58 per hour, was up 9 cents from last year.

The number of hours worked averaged 40.7 hours for hired workers during the survey week, up 1 percent from a year ago.

The largest increases in the number of hired farm workers from last year occurred in the Pacific (Oregon and Washington), Southeast (Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina), Appalachian II (Kentucky,

Tennessee and West Virginia) and Mountain I (Idaho, Montana and Wyoming) regions and in California. In the Pacific region and California, the development of fruit, vegetables and spring planted crops was nearly two weeks ahead of normal, which heightened the demand for hired workers. Although moderate rains fell in parts of the Southeast region, the majority of the region remained drier than normal. Irrigation of cropland increased and supplemental feeding of livestock became active as pastures deteriorated, both of which caused greater demand for hired workers. In the Appalachian II region, continued expansion in the equine and poultry industries kept the demand for livestock workers at a high level. In the Mountain I region, above normal temperatures and below normal precipitation led to increased farm and ranch activity, which caused a greater need for hired workers.

The largest decreases in the number of hired farm workers from a year ago were in the Corn Belt I (Illinois, Indiana and Ohio), Delta (Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi), Southern Plains (Oklahoma and Texas), Northeast I (New York and New England) and Appalachian I (North Carolina and Virginia) regions. In the Corn Belt I region, declining cattle and

poultry inventories lessened the need for livestock workers. Favorable weather prior to the reference week in the Delta region allowed field work to progress rapidly, thereby decreasing the need for workers during the reference week. In the Southern Plains region, growth of pastures and ranges was ahead of normal, which lessened the need for supplemental feeding and reduced the demand for hired workers. Cool temperatures and wet conditions in the Northeast I and Appalachian I regions limited field activity, causing fewer hired workers to be needed.

Hired farm worker wage rates were generally above a year ago in most regions. The largest increases occurred in the Appalachian II, Mountain I, Pacific and Mountain III (Arizona and New Mexico) regions. The higher wages in the Appalachian II region were mainly because of a higher percentage of equine workers in the work force. In the Mountain I region, wages were up due to a larger concentration of salaried workers putting in fewer hours. The higher wages in the Pacific region were because of the increased skilled worker demand for the rapidly developing fruit. In the Mountain III region, wages were up because of a higher proportion of full-time, salaried workers in the work force.

Wage Rates for Hired Workers, by Region & U.S., April 6-12, 2003 & April 11-17, 2004 1/

U.S. and Region 2/	TYPE OF WORKER						Wage Rates for All Hired Workers	
	Field		Livestock		Field & Livestock			
	2003	2004	2003	2004	2003	2004	2003	2004
Dollars per Hour								
Northeast I	9.76	9.47	8.55	8.81	9.27	9.18	10.24	10.35
Northeast II	8.75	8.68	8.20	8.87	8.63	8.73	9.68	9.25
Appalachian I	8.18	8.01	8.37	8.38	8.24	8.14	8.77	8.82
Appalachian II	7.32	8.48	7.24	8.62	7.28	8.55	7.64	9.06
Southeast	7.58	7.88	8.78	8.71	8.07	8.12	8.71	8.42
FL	8.05	7.85	8.10	8.60	8.06	7.94	8.86	8.79
Lake	9.31	9.20	9.20	9.95	9.26	9.60	9.90	10.10
Cornbelt I	9.29	9.04	9.32	8.87	9.30	9.00	9.99	9.74
Cornbelt II	9.94	9.04	10.00	9.03	9.97	9.04	10.71	9.48
Delta	7.20	7.75	7.54	7.47	7.25	7.70	7.63	7.86
Northern Plains	9.08	8.87	9.28	8.51	9.16	8.73	9.46	8.95
Southern Plains	7.62	7.50	7.98	7.93	7.75	7.62	8.31	8.13
Mountain I	7.63	8.14	7.68	8.41	7.66	8.31	7.93	8.57
Mountain II	8.32	9.66	8.86	8.83	8.60	9.29	9.43	9.84
Mountain III	7.10	7.55	8.24	8.20	7.52	7.81	7.93	8.37
Pacific	8.82	9.02	9.28	10.16	8.90	9.16	9.34	9.91
CA	8.33	8.39	10.15	10.00	8.48	8.52	9.22	9.26
HI	9.58	9.51	3/	3/	9.63	9.66	11.50	11.26
US 4/	8.40	8.46	8.75	8.95	8.49	8.58	9.16	9.22

1/ Excludes Agricultural Service Workers. 2/ Regions consist of the following Northeast I: CT, ME, MA, NH, NY, RI, VT. Northeast II: DE, MD, NJ, PA. Appalachian I: NC, VA. Appalachian II: KY, TN, WV. Southeast: AL, GA, SC. Lake MI, MN, WI. Cornbelt I: IL, IN, OH. Cornbelt II: IA, MO. Delta: AR, LA, MS. Northern Plains: KS, NE, ND, SD. Southern Plains: OK, TX. Mountain I: ID, MT, WY. Mountain II: CO, NV, UT. Mountain III: AZ, NM. Pacific: OR, WA. 3/ Insufficient data for livestock. 4/ Excludes AK.

U.S. Agricultural Exports Forecast

U.S. agricultural exports for fiscal year 2004 are forecast at a record \$61.5 billion, exceeding the fiscal 1996 record of \$59.8 billion. Forecast exports are increased \$2.5 billion from February and are \$5.3 billion over fiscal 2003. Since February, horticultural product exports are boosted by \$700 million; corn is up \$400 million and wheat \$300 million. Upward revisions to beef, pork, and cattle

by-products raise livestock product exports \$1 billion. Volume of bulk exports, at 119.7 million tons, exceeds February by 3.0 million tons, and is the largest since 1995.

Export growth in fiscal 2004 reflects higher volumes and higher unit values for feed grains, rice, cotton, beef, and many horticultural products. The improved outlook is due to favorable exchange rates, strong global economic growth, reduced competition for wheat, corn, and

cotton markets, and China's robust demand for oilseeds and cotton. On the other hand, a smaller U.S. soybean crop and BSE-related bans on U.S. beef exports are factors restraining export expansion.

U.S. agricultural imports are forecast at a record \$51.5 billion, a gain of \$5.8 billion over last year. Horticultural products account for nearly half of the growth. The agricultural trade surplus is forecast at \$10 billion.

U.S. Agricultural Trade, Fiscal Years 1999-2004, Year Ending September 30

Item	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Forecast Fiscal year 2004	
						Feb.	May
Billion dollars							
Exports	49.1	50.7	52.7	53.3	56.2	59.0	61.5
Imports	37.3	38.9	39.0	41.0	45.7	49.5	51.5
Balance	11.8	11.9	13.7	12.3	10.5	9.5	10.0

Reflects forecasts in the May 12, 2004, *World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates* report.

Sources: U.S. Department of Agriculture and Bureau of Census, U.S. Department of Commerce.

COMING IN NEXT REPORTER

Barley County Estimates
Ag Prices Received
Winter Wheat Production
Wheat Supply & Demand -ERS

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